

OMAR

رباعیات
کلیله و دمنام

KHAYYAM





رباعیات
حکیم عمر





"The Song that nerves a nation's heart
Is in itself a deed."

(Tennyson.)



"Our sweetest songs are those that tell
of saddest thought."

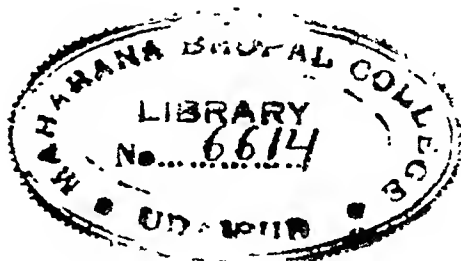
(Shelley.)



"For I am but an Earthly Muse,
And owning but a little art,
To lull with song an aching heart,
And render human love his dues."

(Tennyson.)





A NEW TRANSLATION
OF
Omar Khayyám

BY
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Author of "Random Rhymes" and
"A Bibliography—mainly Avestic and Vedic."

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نه شادی داد سامانی
نه غم آورد نقسانی
بدین جان نیاز سلطانی
تو آمد شد چون مہمانی





(1870-1921).



TO MY DEAR WIFE
WHO HAS GONE BEFORE.

(4th August, 1921.)



*"Await, await : Soon will I sojourn
To meet thee at that distant bourne,
And think not much of my delay,
I am already on my destined way.
And follow thee with all my speed
Desire can make or sorrows breed.
Each minute a short degree,
Every hour a step t'wards thee,
Every morn finds my life's decline,
A nearer thy side and to thee incline.
But hark ! My pulse, like soft drum,
Beats my approach, tells thee I come.
And slow though my marches be,
I shall at last sit down by thee.
So when from hence I shall be gone,
Each shall be both, yet both but one."*

J.





L'ENVOI.



La vie est vaine :
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine . . .
Et puis—bon soir !

La vie est brève :
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve . . .
Et puis—bon soir !

La vie est telle
Que Dieu la fit :
Et telle quelle
Elle suffit !

(Léon Montenacken).



TO THE READER.



AS an humble student of the Rubaiyat Omar Khayyám,⁺ I have very few words to say about the metre in which I have ventured to lay before the English readers a versified translation of only 39 of the Quatrains of this Astronomer-Poet of Persia.

I believe I am bound to offer an apology to all my predecessors who have attempted to publish in an English garb the poetry of Omar Khayyám and particularly to Fitzgerald—the inimitable and incomparable interpreter of Omar's version in the English language, for venturing to lay before the public this humble effort in a metre which is foreign to the original rubaiyat, and a departure from the adopted form of the Quatrain naturalised by Fitzgerald. My reason for the departure is that in order to reclothe the true spirit of Omar's Quatrains the triple rhymes add to the effect and interpretation of the meaning of the poet. This metre may be counted by some undignified in English, but I believe it is capable of being employed with sufficient power to express the pathos, the lilt, the mystical suggestiveness, and the sufistical leanings of the original, as the well-known and familiar rhymes of "The Two Voices" of Tennyson bear ample testimony.

Those who are familiar with the original Persian will be able to discover for themselves how far I have succeeded in being faithful to Omar's sense and meaning. I may confess to have diverted and added a little to the sense to meet the restrictions of rhyme and exigencies of the language, but the analogy of the thought expressed in each rubaiy has been faithfully and with persistence, without being servile, adhered to. Boileau, the great French critic, has well defined the true canon of translation: "To translate servilely into modern

⁺ Vide Appendix to Whinfield's Quatrains of Omar Khayyám, Note B, page 346-348, on the Rubá'í.

language an ancient author, phrase by phrase and word by word, is preposterous ; nothing can be more unlike the original than such a copy. It is not to show, it is to disguise the author."

Fitzgerald's version none can help admiring. But in truth it is no translation, but a "reproduction, a redelivery of a poetic inspiration," a rendering not of language into language, but poesie into poesie. It is the work of a poetic genius inspired by the work of a cognate spirit. Fitzgerald is quite unliteral, and is a sort of "a paraphrase of a syllabus of the poem quite unlike the original." On such a consideration I am led to alter and adopt a metre, which I believe suits the original better than any other I can think of. The simplicity of Omar is such an overpowering virtue of his verses that nothing but a metre so simple as the one I have come to select can, to my mind, bring forth the excellencies of all Omar's conceits and mystical suggestions, bordering upon the mystic communion of the individual with the world-soul.

I have published a few selected Quatrains and propose to follow shortly by an equal number, and thus bring up the total to about 80 of such Quatrains as were selected by Fitzgerald.

I have followed the Edition of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyati Omar Khayyám, edited and literally translated by Edward Heron-Allen and published by Bernard Quaritch in 1899.

In conclusion I must freely take this opportunity to acknowledge that the language in which I have ventured to translate these Quatrains being foreign to me, many defects and short-comings of style, rhyme and diction must surely have crept in, and I would, therefore, beg to crave the indulgence of my readers.

J. E. S.



I

THE Sun darts his bright auroral rays,
As the lingering Night on house-tops strays,
And drives the Stars from milky ways.

DRINK wine! the morning cry declaims,
When Morn's Harbinger his rule proclaims,
And the wide world from sleep reclaims.

II

ERE the Phantom of false morning died
A beckoning Voice, within the Tavern, cried,
Hailed the reveller and his patience tried.

"ARISE! and fill to brim the flowing bowl
"Dilate the mind and raise the song of soul,
"Ere life's last measure on thee doth scowl."





III

'T IS the early morn ! Hark the Cock's shrill
clarion sound

Awake ! arise ! Quaff the wine on vintage ground
O, Saki ! And let the crystal cup go round.

'T IS time for nought but pleasure now
Fly, fly, and cool thy fervent, holy brow,
And drink to dregs the cup's incessant flow.

IV

W HILST seems the world in Happiness to steep,
The thoughtful Soul lost in musings deep,
To solitude retires bathed in ecstatic sleep.

O N every bough he dreams to spy
The white hand of Moses beckoning nigh,
And every breeze wafts Jesus' holy sigh.





V

W HITHER has Iram's rosy garden flown?
Whither Jamshēd's jewelled cup been blown?
To mysterious depths of Time unknown?

B UT within this goblet rich and deep,
The ruby blooms and lulls to sleep
The thirsty Soul, by garden founts that weep.

VI

A ND thus while the day is cool and bright,
Fraught with pleasures, love and light,
The balmy rain to Rose has brought delight.

T HE Philomel in Pehlvi tongue did sing,
To the pale Rose, sicklied o'er with sorrow's sting,
"With wine let's the festal hours ring."





VII

FROM rise of Morn till Evening glare,
I sit me down and Repentance swear,
Of the brimful cup and flowing goblet there.

BUT whilst the hour of Spring is come,
Away! of what avail is grief to one,
O Lord! pardon grant for Repentance done.

VIII

WHEN Life's last measure flickers fast,
Who recks it dies in Balkh or Baghdad last,
And fills the cup with sweet or bitter blast?

QUAFF the wine for after thee and me,
Month after month in haste will flee,
And one by one moons will waning be.





IX

WHILST Winter goes and Spring succeeds,
From the Book of Life the page recedes
Fold after fold—yea, the work for aye proceeds.

THUS to succeeding seasons is Time assigned,
How many mighty Kings to Fate resigned,
Are to dust returned or to Earth consigned?

X

A loaf of bread, a jug of rosy wine,
Would they were put in hands of mine,
Together joint with viands rich and fine.

OH! with thee some lonely nook were mine,
Drinking, carousing there of song divine,
Banqueting on intellectual wine.





XI

'TIS writ "Eden's radiant fields with Houris smile"
But swear I, sans favour, fear or guile,
There is bliss in every drop of wine ; meanwhile

DON'T let slip Cash, but let Credit go,
As in every beat of Drum 'tis always so
For distance lends to sound the sweetest flow.

XII

SAY they "Paradise and Kausar's elysium fount,
Where purest wine with honeyed waters mount
With sugar mixt," alas ! on these they vainly count.

THESE forgo, and fill the cup with ruby wine,
In thy hands let the crystal goblet shine ;
Could one thousand "Credits" equal "Cash"
a single time ?





XIII

THUS spake the Rose, "Lo, into the world I
brought,
As the World's light I saw with smiling thought,
A hand all full with golden pieces fraught ;

UNTIED my golden purse and unstrung
The knot, as to the last spark of life I clung,
What cash I had all to the world I flung."

XIV

ERE grim Death on thy head lets fall,
The last stroke, remember, above all,
The rose-coloured Wine-cup to recall.

FOR oh, Thou hare-brained fool ! ne'er dream,
Belike the buried treasure, thou wilt ever beam
Out again from thy closed grave's darkest gleam.





XV

A moment grant, World's wealth within thy hold,
A moment grant, Earth's dominion unsold,
Within thy grasp, with world's treasures untold,

O H! man, anon wilt thou find and know,
That belike the drifting melting snow,
A day or two will stay, so thou too wilt go.

XVI

I N this shattered hostelry of Life—what “world”
we call,
The massive portals of Day and Night alternate fall,
Belike a piebald horse sleeping in his resting-stall.

T HIS “world” pavilion-like is sore bereft,
Of hundred Jamsheds who have gone and left,
A palace-world where hundred Behrams rest.





XVII

IN Courts where Behram gloried and drank deep
The ruby wine, there run and creep
The cunning fox and wolf, and lions sleep.

BEHRAM, erst while, a famous hunter known,
The Wild-Ass-hunter's name was proud to own,
Now o'er his grave, the Wild-Ass roams, and
grass has grown.

XVIII

WHERE'ER blows luxuriant the tulip-bed,
Where'er blooms the Rose so red,
They carnationed grow where some buried Cæsar bled.

EVERY violet that on the Earth is grown,
Every hyacinth that in the garden is blown,
Belike mole on a maiden's cheek is shown.





XIX

THE verdant Herb that on the river-marge doth lie,
With the velvet bloom on Beauty's cheek doth vie,
And the soft-downs on cherub's face seems to defy.

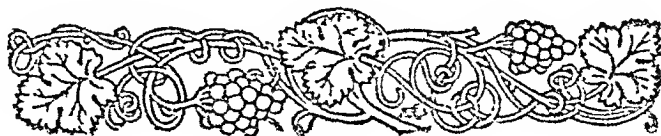
BUT O, Man! take heed; Learn to tread with
gentle foot

The Herb that takes its deepest root,
Owes to the dust of crimsoned-cheeked its comely fruit.

XX

OH! Friend! just fill the measure and have no fears
Of the Morrow and shed no needless tears,
For, 'tis Today which to our heart endears.

FOR we, Tomorrow from this world must part,
And forced the Souls to join with lowly heart,
Who, s'en thousand years ago, did start.





XXI

L O V I N G comrades in Friendship's tie,
Have me forgot ; and one by one down-trodden lie,
By Death struck low, the Friends' Society.

W I T H wine, Life's gay round we oft beguiled ;
With merry converse and joyous talk we smiled ;
And, ere my time, draughts on draughts they piled.

XXII

U P ! up ! And heed not this World's fleeting show,
And chase away all thy carking cares below,
And not for worlds, Life's blissful time forego.

H A D this World's favours constant been,
From the chequered turn of life we would
have seen
Thee, from Death, unlike mortals, for ever wean.





XXIII

LET no clinging sorrow thee o'er-power,
Let no idle grief upon thee lower,
Let no remorse, affliction, be thy dower.

A Book of mellow ditties, a gentle maiden's lip,
A garden's verdant marge, n'er let slip,
Ere Death opes, on thee, his fatal grip.

XXIV

TO what faith, what creed, what form comply,
Some grope in doubt, some after dogmas sigh,
Lost in musings deep and contemplation high.

INSTANT forth issues the proclaiming Voice
The veil behind, on the viewless wings of choice,
"Thy Road lies neither here nor there," So why
rejoice.





XXV

THE Saints and Seers who have taught,
Two World's Secrets so dearly bought,
Eftsoons their love is set at naught.

LIKE benighted souls are they thrust,
To silent graves all filled with dust
To rot and crumble as they must.

XXVI

LEARN to shun the Wise and go
With old Khayyám, for 'tis e'er so,
Life flies fast ; why such vain ado ?

'TIS writ large—"World's a phantom show,
The worldly wise full well they know
Fair flowers fade oft before they blow."





XXVII

FROM early youth with eager zest
I sought the wise with learning blest,
Held converse high, sublime and best,

METHOUGHT wisdom's portals had I oped
wide,
Rent the Veil, and Darkness brushed aside ;
But lo ! No greater fool did e'er abide.

XXVIII

WITH them I garnered Wisdom's Seed,
Its vital growth did I with water feed
Its silent growth marks its hidden reed.

BUT alas ! my life ebb'd like ocean tide,
Like bubble burst ; when all deride
At my folly vast and insensate pride.





XXIX

FOR aye the Eternal question ask ; why
Hast thou ta'en mundane birth ; and try
To probe the riddle whence you come by ?

CAN mighty human wit decide, whither
To unknown realms sojourning, neither
Saint nor Seer can read the riddle hither.

XXX

OFT did I from this Earth's centre stray
To Saturn's ringed orbs, to Milky Way :
Scores of riddles unravelled and resolved to stay.

TO solve the mysteries of Life and Fate,
Saints and Seers have knocked at Heaven's gate ;
Vain, in vain they grope ; alas, late, too late !





XXXI

THERE was a mystery to which I found no key,
There was a veil through which I could
not see ;
Of what avail then the talk of Thee and Me.

FOR short spell we held too brief converse
Of Thee and Me, and Me to Thee oft reverse ;
Alack how futile seemed the theme to rehearse.

XXXII

THEN to high Heaven itself I cried
And asked—what celestial light can guide
Destiny's destined way. So I replied—

UNTUTORED minds stumble in the dark,
Seek the last refuge as in Noah's Ark,
Soul's dark nights most brilliant spark.





XXXIII

THEN once to the potter I thus address—
Can one learn life's dark secrets and be blest
In fire to reach ever-lasting rest?

N'ER cherish false hopes within your heart
For Death will end all joys with painful
smart ;
Be sure that once dead ye for aye depart.

XXXIV

ONCE the Rose was heard lament its plight
In the rose water fount to drown and fight;
When I espied the Bulbul to alight

AND sing loud in full joyous strain :
“Why dost thou not from sorrow restrain
And bring joy and peace in Thy daily train?”





XXXV

NO Past and no Future here do we own
Only the Present we claim, all else disown;
Shun regrets and reap what you have sown.

LEAVE for e'er vain speculation behind ;
No good, no happiness therein you will find
For Wine unties all knots and regales the mind.

XXXVI

OH, fool ! Why give way to empty fear ?
Receive what Heaven assigns you here ;
To your lot resign and hold this dictum dear :

“SEIZE what joy, what happiness you can
Whilst this short span of life of man
Lasts and behold high Heaven's enlightened plan.”





XXXVII

I DREAMT, and a voice whispered in my ear
In tones faintly distant but clear,
Urging me to heed and listen without fear.

IT said, "Thou lovest the hours of delight,
Drink wine ere with Death you fight,
For soon it will enshroud you in endless night."

XXXVIII

IN early youth with zeal pursued
Doctor and Saint, methought was I endued
With Wisdom's store, and e'ermore argued

ON questions recondite of Death and Life ;
But all fruitless seemed, with folly rife,
Groped for the Door, but how vain the strife.



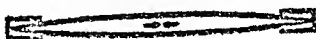


XXXIX

FROM them I garnered deep Wisdom's seeds
By study deep, but simply learnt uprooting
weeds ;

Sought in vain the fruit a Searcher needs.

IN fine, alas, I n'er more knew
The Real Door ; how true I found the clue
"Like Water came I and like Wind I flew."



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